Friday, July 12, 2013

Heather Joseph on the state of Open Access: Where are we, what still needs to be done?

This is the fourth Q&A in a series exploring the current state of Open Access (OA). On this occasion the questions are answered by Heather Joseph.

A former journal publisher, Joseph has in her time worked for both Elsevier and the American Society for Cell Biology (ACSB). In 2005, however, she changed direction and became Executive Director for the Scholarly Publishing & Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), an alliance of academic and research libraries created in 1998 by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). SPARC's original mission was to "use libraries' buying power to nurture the creation of high-quality, low-priced publication outlets for peer-reviewed scientific, technical, and medical research."

Subsequently SPARC also changed direction, becoming an OA advocacy group. And under Joseph's able leadership SPARC has proved extremely effective at making the case for OA, and persuading researchers, institutions, funders and governments to embrace OA. In particular, Joseph led SPARC's efforts to secure the US National Institutes of Health (NIH) Public Access Policy, and the recent White House Directive on Public Access to the Results of Publicly Funded Research.

In May last year, for instance, Joseph — along with OA advocates John Wilbanks and Michael Carroll, and publisher Mike Rossner — met with John Holdren and Mike Stebbins of the US Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSPT). As a follow-up to the meeting they organised a White House petition calling for "free access over the Internet to scientific journal articles arising from taxpayer-funded research". The petition quickly attracted the requisite 25,000 signatures needed to trigger a response from the government, which came this February in the shape of the White House Memorandum.

Importantly, the Memorandum directs "each Federal agency with over $100 million in annual conduct of research and development expenditures to develop a plan to support increased public access to the results of research funded by the Federal Government".

But for me there is no better evidence of the efficacy of SPARC's activities than the contents of an exchange I had a couple of years ago with an employee of one of the larger traditional scholarly publishers. When I suggested that perhaps publishers ought to stop lobbying against OA and learn to love it, my interlocutor's face expressed a complicated mix of emotions — including exasperation and muted anger, but also (I felt) some admiration for the OA movement. He replied, "It's not just publishers who are lobbying you know." Then a few seconds later he added, "I'll tell you what, if you can get SPARC to stop lobbying against us we will stop lobbying against Open Access."

Since then the OA movement has gone from strength to strength, in what has become a classic David and Goliath contest — a smallish group of impecunious but tireless OA advocates lined up against an army of well-heeled corporations determined to stop them.

But how things will end we do not yet know. What is certain, as Joseph concedes, is that "much still needs to be done" before the OA movement can claim to have succeeded in its aims.

Earlier contributors to this series include palaeontologist Mike Taylor, cognitive scientist Stevan Harnad, and former librarian Fred Friend.

Q: What in your view have been the major achievements of the OA movement since you joined SPARC as director in 2005?

A: It's hard not to be amazed by how far we as a community have come in establishing such a robust supporting infrastructure for Open Access. The growth in the number of high-quality OA journal outlets and open digital repositories has been incredible. I pulled a presentation I gave back in 2005; at that point, we were talking in

OA Essays Open Access in Serbia Open Access in India Open Access in Egypt ScienceDirect Open Access in California OA in Latin America Open Access in the Humanities MDPI Preprints Selecting Reviewers Global Research Council OA Big Deal Open Notebook Science Elsevier Gates Foundation OA in South Africa OA in France SSRN OA & the Humanities Timothy Gowers Harold Varmus Peter Suber OA in Poland OA Embargoes Big Deal Finch Report Jeffrey Beall ALPSP OA Mandates PLOS Peer Review Springer BioMed Central Free Software Digital Preservation Dove Medical OA in Russia Radical OA Almost OA HEFCE Frontiers

Heather Joseph

terms of a few hundred OA journals, and a few dozen OA repositories as options for scholars. Now we are looking at nearly 10,000 viable OA journal outlets and more than 2,000 OA repositories in play around the world! This has made it almost impossible to dismiss OA as simply a fringe movement.

What's been even more important from my perspective is that we've seen OA journal publishing models proving that they can be sustainable – and even profitable. This has accelerated the number and diversity of publishers jumping into the game, and these new players are also innovating – introducing interesting new business models (like the PeerJ's membership model). All of this is helping to create a much healthier journal marketplace, which is one of SPARC's primary goals.

But for me, the crowning achievement has been the steady increase in the understanding and adoption of the concept of Open Access by policymakers around the world. Markets are subject to rules, and the rules can be set to either help or hinder the growth of Open Access. The OA community has been extremely effective in organizing ourselves to ensure that we have a seat at the relevant tables where these rules are set – locally, nationally and internationally. And as you pointed out in your introduction, we've seen these efforts pay off in all three arenas. I can happily look back on the day the NIH Public Access Policy was signed into law in 2007, and the day the White House OSTP Directive on Public Access was issued earlier this year as two as the most satisfying days in my professional career!

Q: What have been the main disappointments?

A: The one that still keeps me awake at night is the initial inclusion of embargo periods in funder policies, and the subsequent assumption that some have made that embargos are a necessary, permanent policy component. From a pragmatic standpoint, I fully understand that the development of policy is an incremental process, and that you rarely start off with a policy that is perfect. The 12-month embargo was included in the NIH's policy on access to articles as an absolutely necessary compromise to successfully get **any** policy off the ground, and the NIH policy has served an incredibly useful purpose as a benchmark for other funders to follow.

However, I firmly believe that the embargo period was intended to be a transitional policy component. It should be reviewed periodically, with an eye towards shortening the delay in delivering critical information to the public, and ultimately, removing it all together. It's very disappointing to me to hear conversations in some quarters about extending the length of embargo periods, rather than reducing them or eliminating them altogether.

Q: There has always been a great deal of discussion (and disagreement) about Green and Gold OA. In light of recent developments (e.g. the OSTP Memorandum, the RCUK OA Policy, and the European Research Council Guidelines on OA) what would you say are the respective roles that Green and Gold OA should be playing today?

A: I've always agreed with the framing of OA in the BOAI that these two strategies are complementary, and that they are appropriate solutions for scholars and researchers at different times, in different situations. SPARC has tried to be vigilant in providing equal support for both OA journals and OA repository development – both bring tremendous benefits to the library community.

When it comes to policy advocacy, though, we do promote the use of repositories as a primary compliance solution. Using the requiring of deposition in an OA repository as the baseline requirement for funder policies has helped to provide a cost-effective compliance mechanism that is extremely straightforward, and that can easily harmonized across funding agencies, research disciplines, and geographic boundaries.

We also do encourage research funders to accept publication in OA journals as an **additional** acceptable mechanism, and to provide funds to cover reasonable publication costs wherever possible. It's proven to be an effective strategy, particularly with US policymakers.

Q: What about Hybrid OA?

A: Hybrids have been tougher to deal with than I first imagined! To me, they have so much potential to provide an effective transitional strategy for publishers looking to move from a subscription-based model to an OA model. The basic concept of offering OA to willing takers, and subsequently adjusting subscription fees commensurately over time is a good risk-mitigation strategy, and provides a reasonable amount of control for a publisher to manage a move to OA fairly closely.

Of course, it requires a genuine commitment to transparency on the part of the publisher to work effectively. And while some publishers who have implemented hybrid models have done a terrific job of clearly reporting the uptake of OA by

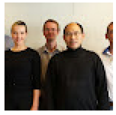
Alternatives , explained why he believes the var...

PLOS CEO Alison Mudditt discusses new OA agreement with the University of California

The Public Library of Science (PLOS) and the University of California (UC) have today announced a two-year agreement designed to make...

The OA Interviews: Taylor & Francis' Deborah Kahn discusses Dove Medical Press

Please note the postscript to this interview here The open-access publisher Dove Medical Press has a controversial past and I have writ...



The Open Access Interviews: Publisher MDPI

Headquartered in Basel, Switzerland, the Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, or more usually MDPI , is an open access publisher...

Copyright: the immoveable barrier that open access advocates underestimated

In calling for research papers to be made freely available open access advocates promised that doing so would lead to a simpler, less cos...

The Open Access Interviews: OMICS Publishing Group's Srinu Babu Gedela

***Update: On August 26th 2016, the US government (Federal Trade Commission) announced that it has charged OMICS with making false claims, ...

Community Action Publishing: Broadening the Pool

We are today seeing growing dissatisfaction with the pay-to-publish model for open access. As this requires authors (or their funders or ins...

Robin Osborne on the state of Open Access: Where are we, what still needs to be done?

One of a series exploring the current state of Open Access

authors, and lowering subscription fees, many have not — especially in the cases where publishers require bundled subscription purchases.

Trust between publishers and their library subscribers is in fairly short supply; and the relationship has been further strained by some publishers who have engaged in double-dipping practices. This has unfortunately thrown a real damper on the potential effectiveness of this model, as many institutions have chosen to simply say no to funding for any hybrids — a real shame.

Q: How would you characterise the current state of OA, both in the US and internationally?

A: We are in a really interesting period in the OA movement's history — particularly in the UK and the US — where OA has burst into the spotlight, and taken centre stage in policy circles in a way we haven't previously experienced.

With the profusion of highly-visible mandates that are now pending (from 23 Federal Agencies and Departments in the U.S. alone this year!) we've seen a fascinating change: no one wants to appear to be the outlier who now opposes Open Access. Organizations who previously fought tooth-and-nail against OA mandates are now singing a completely different tune, vowing to policy makers that they are now OA's staunchest supporters.

The catch is, of course, that they have very different definitions of what OA actually means, and their ideas for implementing OA policy solutions reflect these differences. So we are in the middle of a very eventful, somewhat messy and chaotic period where the battle for **how** OA is implemented is now in full swing. It is a very different process from what (in hindsight!) now feels like the relatively straightforward task of convincing folks that OA was worth pursuing.

Q: What still needs to be done, and by whom?

A: So much still needs to be done! I've got two major items that consistently rise to the top of my priority list, though. The first is to build a campaign that can, in a simple and straightforward way, educate the broadest possible community about the critical importance of enabling the **right** set of reuse rights for OA content.

We're at risk of having scholars and researchers adopt licenses that only get us part of the way to OA, simply because they don't understand the consequences that choosing various options carry. It's a lesson we should take from the embargo period question: the decisions we make now about endorsing or adopting specific reuse licenses will have consequences that we must be prepared to live for many years to come.

The second is to more aggressively align the incentive system for scholars to reward the adoption of OA practices. Funders, research evaluators, administrators need to be educated about the potential benefits that can accrue to individuals and institutions when OA is supported as the norm, and rewarded accordingly. Alternative and Article Level Metrics have a critical role to play here.

Q: What in your view is the single most important task that the OA movement should focus on today?

A: I think it is critical for us to recognize that the moment is in our hands when we need to stop thinking of Open Access as fighting to **become** the norm for research and scholarship, and to begin acting in ways that acknowledge that Open Access **is** the norm. There comes a time in every movement when the underdog becomes the leader; recognizing that moment and effectively capitalizing on it is imperative.

It sounds like a simple task, but I think it's one of the hardest challenges our movement will ever face. For more than a decade, we've been fighting a specific fight; many of my colleagues have used the very apt Ghandi quote to describe our progress: "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you — and then you win."

It's what comes after winning that we have a collective responsibility to be deliberate about considering right now.

Q: What does OA have to offer the developing world?

A: One of the inherent strengths of OA is that it offers a genuine opportunity to democratize access to a critical layer of information, and to open channels for communication and collaboration between/among scholars who previously would never have had the chance to connect. It offers individuals — in the developing world yes, but also outside of research institutions and even the academe as a whole — the chance to be active participants in the scholarly and research process.

Far from simply enabling interested individuals, anywhere, anytime to access and consume information, OA enables them to actively contribute to the generation of knowledge. This opens up a world of information to the developing world, but perhaps more importantly, it opens up a world of information being generating by the developing world to everyone else.

Q: What are your expectations for OA in 2013?

(OA), the Q&A below is with Robin Osborne , Professor of Ancient History a...

The OA Interviews: Frances Pinter
In 2012 serial entrepreneur Frances Pinter founded a new company called Knowledge Unlatched (KU). The goal, she explained in 2013, was ...

Blog Archive

A: To be honest, 2013 has already exceeded all of my rational expectations for progress in OA!

I am hopeful that 2013 will mark the year that we can also point to that marks the time when all of the "open" movements – Open Access, OER, Open Data, Open Science – found more deliberate ways to collaborate, and to leverage our collective strengths.

Truly making "open" the default in research and scholarship is going to require an effort that requires numbers far beyond those currently in the OA movement.

Q: Will OA in your view be any less expensive than subscription publishing? If so, why/how? Does cost matter anyway?

A: I think that it can be. In many instances, I think OA will provide less expensive options for publishing than the subscription model currently does, because most of the business models used to support OA require that individual scholars play a direct role in making payment decisions. This means that a market pressure that has been largely missing in the subscription-based world has now been inserted back into picture.

I also think that because we have such a growing number of high-quality OA journal outlets, we will see price sensitivity emerge among Article Processing Charges (APC's). Some publishers are suggesting that we may already be seeing signs that competition is driving authors to factor APC costs more heavily into their publication decisions.

On the other hand, it also seems quite clear that journals that follow models that are dependent on high amounts of editorial intervention are highly unlikely to see their costs reduced. And that's fine – cost matters, but what matters even more is establishing a healthier marketplace that is less vulnerable to control by a limited number of players.

Heather Joseph serves as the Executive Director of the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC), an international coalition of academic and research libraries that promotes the expanded sharing of scholarship.

As SPARC's Director since 2005, Heather has focused on supporting open access infrastructure, policies and practices. As the architect of SPARC's advocacy agenda, she led the organization's efforts to secure the US NIH Public Access Policy, and the recent White House Directive on Public Access to the Results of Publicly Funded Research.

Prior to joining SPARC, she spent 15 years as a journal publisher in both commercial and not-for-profit publishing organizations, and currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors of the Public Library of Science (PLOS), the Open Knowledge Commons, and DuraSpace.

Among many other national appointments, she has served on the National Advisory Committee for the US National Institutes of Health's PubMed Central article archive, and on the US National Academy of Sciences Study Committee on Digital Data Curation. She is a frequent speaker and writer on scholarly communications in general, and on open access in particular.

Posted by Richard Poynder at 17:41

1 comment:

Stevan Harnad said...

Brava Heather, for your monumental efforts and successes!

A little food for thought:

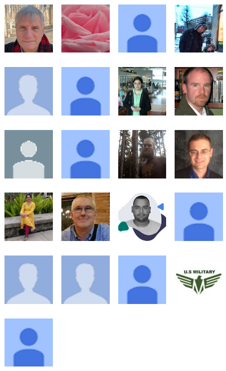
Mandates' Embargo-Limits: Imposing embargo-limits in an OA mandate is a 2-edged sword. Yes, if publishers comply, they hasten OA. But such mandates also encourage the adoption of embargoes; and they also encourage lengthening embargoes beyond the allowable limit. And that encourages authors not to comply with OA mandates.

But the solution is simple: Mandate (require) immediate deposit, as a condition for funding, strongly encourage (but do not require) immediate OA, and strongly encourage (but do not require) OA within an allowable maximal embargo-limit.

That ensures that everything is deposited immediately without forcing authors who want to publish in a journal with an embargo that exceeds the allowable limit either to give up the journal, not comply with the publisher's embargo, or not comply with the funder's mandate.

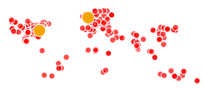
Followers

Followers (117) Next



Follow

1,567 Pageviews
Nov. 12th - Dec. 12th



There is no need for that triple bind on authors if the requirement is immediate-deposit, but immediate-OA is merely strongly encouraged. And the repository's eprint-request Button can tide over users' needs during any embargo.

It's possible that some of the big research funding agencies have enough clout with both authors and publishers to ensure compliance with embargo limits on both sides, but it is sure that individual universities do not. And yet universities (and research institutions) are the slumbering giant of OA, because not all research is funded (and not all funders mandate OA), but all research originates from universities (and research institutions). So university mandates have to be designed to ensure that authors will comply: and the immediate-deposit mandate (+ Button) does precisely that.

Publishers' Embargo Rationale: On another front: Funders, institutions and OA advocates should stop treating publishers' OA embargoes -- adopted in the name of sustaining subscription revenues -- as a justifiable rationale by publishers. The fact is that not only are subscriptions over-priced, but they also bundle together products and services (and their costs) that will be obsolete once all articles are OA. Embargoes are an attempt to hold OA hostage to these obsolescent costs, instead of letting journal publishing evolve naturally to what is optimal and economical in the online era, at a fair, sustainable price:

Once all peer-reviewed finasl drafts are deposited and hence accessible via the distributed worldwide network of OA repositories, there is no longer any need for the publisher's print edition, online edition, access-provision or archiving. The only thing that's still needed from the publisher is competent editors to manage the peer review.

The cost, per paper, of peer review is only a small fraction of what the worldwide subscriptions are paying, per article, for all the rest of the products and services co-bundled into the subscription.

And it is that forcible overpayment that publisher OA embargoes are designed to hold hostage.

This underlying reality and its cause-effect contingencies need to be made crystal clear in designing OA policy and advocacy.

And, again, the immediate-deposit mandate (with the Button) is the fastest and surest way to subvert it.

July 13, 2013 2:07 pm